

letters from Browning to Miss Isa Blagden
 filled with a
 sort of preparatory-school impropriety that,
 coming from
 him, takes the breath away; but Tennyson
 was instant
 to denounce 'poisonous honey brought
 from France*,

with a past like George Sand's. Even a
 supposedly ad-
 vanced thinker like Samuel Butler becomes
 so appalled
 at the obvious situation behind
 Shakespeare's *Sonnets* as
 to pervert dates and facts. Fortune was
 indeed witty the
 day she made three ostrich-feathers the
 crest of our heir-
 apparent; for it is certainly an emblem more
 appropriate
 to England than to the blindest king of
 Bohemia.

The strength of the English instinct to rely
 on instinct
 and distrust intelligence comes out nowhere
 more clearly
 than in our methods of training and
 education. We still
 value for the flower of our youth the playing-
 fields above
 the laboratories of Eton; for the flower of
 our army,
 Chelsea barrack-square above aeroplane and
 tank. In the
 War it was an article of faith in my regiment
 that our first
 battalion was invincible in action because,
 on the march,
 whatever the heat, the men were never
 allowed to undo
 their collars or wear their caps on the
 back of their
 heads; even in the first-line trenches, where
 shaving was
 agony, we acted on the principle that if our
 sentries
 were allowed to remain unbarbered one day,
 they would
 run like rabbits the next; and when we
 came out, we
 were kept 'sloping arms' and 'presenting

arms*, as if we
were the following week to mount guard at
Potsdam.
The French might grow shaggy beards,
march out of
step, and otherwise excite our military
contempt, without
fighting a whit the worse for it; but with
English soldiers,
so the theory went, the battle might be lost
for an undone
button. It was stupid; it was lazy—it became
so easy to
give the order, 'Handling arms this
morning'; and yet,